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硕 士 学 位 论 文

## On the English-Chinese Translation of Children's Literature from the Perspective of Functional Equivalence Theory

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## Abstract

The market of children's literary books has evolved into a flourishing stage in China. Every year, huge numbers of literary books are produced specifically for children, most of which are translated books, specifically those translated from English into Chinese. However, the quality of those translated books from English into Chinese is far from satisfactory. This thesis uses Eugene A. Nida's Functional Equivalence Theory as the theoretical framework to carry out a data-based study of the English-Chinese translation of children's literature, specifically, a comparative study of three classic English books of children's literature and their corresponding translation versions in Chinese.

With a comparative study of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *Charlotte's Web*, and *Peter Pan: The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up* and their translation versions in Chinese, this thesis finds out several translation problems with children's literature from English into Chinese. Those translation problems include: problems in terms of words; problems in terms of syntax and problems in terms of cultural differences. At the same time, causes leading to those translation problems are analyzed and some translation principles are proposed for translators of children's literature under the guidance of Nida's Functional Equivalence Theory. Major causes leading to those translation problems in translation of children's literature are: translators' unawareness of target readers; translators' unawareness of educational function and their blind pursuit of formal equivalence. Based on those causes, this thesis suggests the translators of children's literature to abide by following principles: principles at the lexical level, including the simple principle and the normative principle; principles at the syntactic level; principles at the cultural level, including the footnote principle and domestication principle.

**Key words:** English-Chinese translation of children's literature; Functional Equivalence Theory; translation problems; translation principles

## 摘 要

当下的中国儿童文学图书市场已经进入了一个繁荣时期。每年都有大量的儿童文学图书出版，其中大多数是由外文（尤其是由英文）翻译过来的书籍。然而，这些儿童文学译著却存在大量的翻译问题，质量堪忧。本文以尤金·奈达的功能对等理论为理论框架，通过对三本英文儿童文学名著及其中文译本进行对比、分析和研究，系统探究儿童文学英译汉过程中的问题。

本文通过对《爱丽丝梦游仙境》、《夏洛的网》和《小飞侠彼得潘》及其中文译本进行的对比研究，找出了儿童文学英译汉过程中的诸多问题。问题主要分为三类：词汇类问题；句法类问题以及文化类问题。同时本文以功能对等理论为指导，深入讨论了儿童文学英汉翻译中的问题，对其原因进行分析并探讨了儿童文学英译汉过程中所应遵循的原则。本文认为造成儿童文学英汉翻译问题的原因主要有三点，分别是：译者对于儿童文学的目标读者认识不足；译者对于儿童文学的教育功能认识不足；译者盲目追求翻译中的形式对等。基于以上原因，本文建议在儿童文学翻译中应该遵循以下原则。第一，在词汇翻译中，应遵循简单原则及规范原则；第二，在语句翻译中，应尽量转化语句结构；第三，在涉及到文化元素的翻译时，应遵循脚注原则及归化原则。

**关键词：**儿童文学英汉翻译 功能对等理论 翻译问题 翻译原则



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## Chapter One Introduction

This thesis attempts to discuss a variety of problems that have emerged from the translation of children's literature from English into Chinese. The research is carried out in the perspective of Eugene A. Nida's theory of Functional Equivalence. Causes leading to the problems are analyzed and several translation principles are proposed and discussed for the English-Chinese translation of children's literature.

The research is conducted on the basis of a comparative study between three classic English literary works for children and their corresponding Chinese versions. All the three original novels and their corresponding translation versions are among the most popular books for children in both their original countries and China. Those three works and their Chinese versions are: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll and its translation version by Run Qing (闰青, 2010), published in 2010; *Charlotte's Web*, written by E.B White and its translation version by Ren Rongrong (任溶溶, 2005), published in 2005; and *Peter Pan: the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up* by J.M. Barrie and its translation version by Qian Dawei (钱大伟, 2010), published in 2010.

### 1.1 Research Background

Since translation has become an independent branch of science, the world has witnessed its great progress over the past fifty years. Numerous theories have sprung up during its comparatively short history, including the Skopos theory, the School of Linguistics and so on. All those theories have exerted great influences on translation in both practical and theoretical terms. However, with the fast development of translation study in general, there is an area in translation research that has not received due attention for a long time. The translation of children's literature, despite its important role in translation study, has hardly attracted any attention from translation scholars, whether in China or outside China.

The inadequate attention to the translation of children's literature in the area of translation study is indeed an abnormal phenomenon considering the huge disproportion of the practice of translation of children's literature in relation to the academic study of translation of children's literature. On the one hand, there is a great number of translated literary works for children in the book market; on the other hand, no specialized translation theory has up to now been put forward to guide the translation of children's literature. Due to the lack of guiding theories, most translated works for children, which are sold in large quantities on the book market, are of poor quality. There are a lot of problems in those translated books of children's literature. In addition, with the development of economy and educational industry in China, Chinese parents are paying more and more attention to their children's education. Those translated books of children's literature are often chosen by Chinese parents as important tools to educate their children. Those translation problems, which confuse or puzzle children who read the books containing them, will consequently have bad influences on the young target readers, specifically on the development of their linguistic competence. In short, the translation of children's literature needs to be given more attention by translation scholars. This thesis argues that only when its marginalized status in the field of translation research is changed, can the quality of children's literary works be truly improved.

Nida's Functional Equivalence Theory is one of the translation theories that has evoked most interest and controversy in the field of translation research. Nida (1964) put forward the theory for the first time in his book *Towards a Science of Translation*. After that, he kept improving the theory throughout his life. The theory is of great significance in guiding translation practice, as it offers a brand new perspective for translation, i.e., receptor's response. This concept reveals the theory's unique criterion to judge the quality of translated works; translation quality evaluation must depend on receptor's response to the translation version. With the guidance of the concept of receptor's response, the theory has been widely employed in translating different kinds of literary texts, including advertisements with poetic texts and film subtitles. In this thesis, the author tries to apply the Functional Equivalence Theory to the research



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